

## Commentary...

### Demolition Delay Bylaw Needed to Preserve History

By JEANNE CLARK



Property of Edna Heeks, 47 Standish St., before demolition.

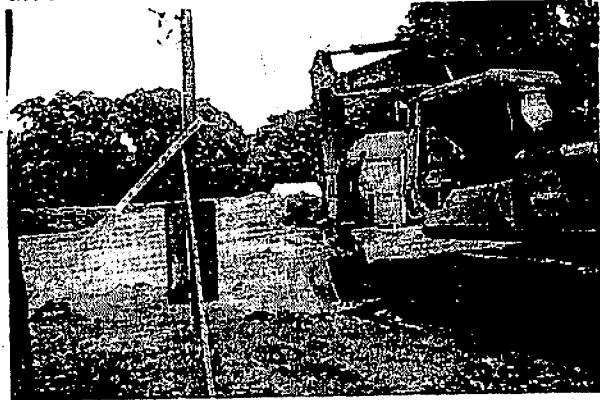
The *Duxbury Clipper* since its beginnings has published charming and informative articles about bygone days in Duxbury. Often the pieces were reprints of authors who lived in an earlier time so that their anecdotes and detailed descriptions were in fact original source material which delighted readers and connected them to a living history of their adopted town. More recently the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society has instituted a unique educational program for grades 2 and 5. The school children are taken about the town and taught to appreciate how a village is built. They learn from town reports about the commitment of a community to the welfare of its members. They view outstanding architecture and learn about the scale of one building to another.

Edna Marie Heeks lived in a pristine house on the corner of Standish St. and Hornbeam Rd. which was built in the mid-19th century by her forebears, the Freeman family. She was born in that house which her grandfather, Elijah Reed, had deeded to her parents, Waldo and Sarah Reed, as a wedding present. Hornbeam Rd. was the cart path that led to the bay. In 1796 Benjamin Freeman had built the handsome red house on the opposite corner of Hornbeam Rd. Recently, Mrs. Heeks made the difficult decision to sell her family homestead. Within a week she had a buyer. Last Wednesday that house, built on a granite foundation and supported by the large, strong timbers used in that era, was demolished and loaded into dumpsters which were taken to a demolition landfill -- all in less than a day. A barn and a small shed remain temporarily.

There have been 12 demolition permits in Duxbury thus far in 1996. Some probably are warranted. The procedure is entirely legal. The wealth of historical

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, July 31, 1996

buildings, from the finest Federal house to the smallest cottage is a treasure that is easy to take for granted. Do we have to wait for someone to raze one of the ship captain's houses on the Bluefish River before we take action?



47 Standish St. after demolition.

Sarah Wingate Taylor, the poet and teacher, not only left her family's homestead on Clark's Island to the DR&HS so that future generations could enjoy its beauty and serenity, but she also endowed an annual lecture series free to the public. Perhaps she knew we all needed reminding about the precious heritage Duxbury has and how it must be preserved and taught to those who follow, so that the humanitarian and aesthetic values will endure. Last April, in her name, the DR&HS presented a panel of eminent historians and preservationists in Massachusetts. One of the points raised was the necessity for a demolition delay ordinance which many towns and cities in the state have enacted. A specified amount of time would allow for discussion and review of the subject property before it could be destroyed for all time.

The economic pressures for land in Duxbury are enormous. That is not going to change. Let the sad story of Mrs. Heek's house be a wake-up call.